

## Charles Goodnight Area- Young Couples & Friends

The northeast part of the Texas Forts Trail Region is only an hour from Fort Worth and makes for the perfect weekend getaway. This popular section of the region includes two forts, hiking with beautiful scenery, Mineral Wells' infamous Crazy Water and the best chicken fried steak you'll ever have!

### Mineral Wells



**Lake Mineral Wells State Park** is one of the most visited state parks in Texas thanks to its location just west of Fort Worth. Along with convenient access from Cowtown, this park offers a variety of beautiful scenery. You may want to start your day with a hike through **Penitentiary Hollow**. This breathtaking rock formation offers a hiking suitable for all skill levels. Walk through a tunnel formed by two towering, 30 foot, rocks, and follow the trees as their luscious canopies form a ceiling over your head. Once through the tunnel, emerge on the other side to discover a

stunning oasis - and don't be afraid to enjoy the view.

After your outdoor adventure, stroll around in downtown Mineral Wells and grab a bite to eat at **Brazos Market Bistro**. This charming red-brick building houses unique knick knacks and gifts as well as tasty bistro-style soups, salads, pizzas and daily specials. After lunch, head next door to **Merrimac and North** to get a sweet treat such as a cake ball, jumbo cupcake or fudge to eat on your walk to the famous Baker Hotel.



In 1929, the **Baker Hotel** opened two weeks after Black Tuesday and was the first hotel with an Olympic-sized swimming pool. It was one of the top destination resorts in the nation with a luxurious reputation including a laundry list of A-list guests, most notably Clark Gable, Judy Garland, future President Lyndon B. Johnson and many more. After the closing of Fort Wolters, the Mineral Wells economy suffered, and the hotel closed its doors for the final time in 1972. The building now sits vacant with its beautiful architecture still intact. While people are not allowed inside, a brief venture around the hotel makes it is easy to image how magnificent it once was.

The next stop is **Clark Gardens Botanical Park**. Hidden down a country road just outside of town, this is not your typical garden or Botanical Park. The gardens are made up of native, climate-adaptable and drought-tolerant plants that provide unique beauty to this well-manicured scenery. Check their website to see what plants are blooming when. If you happen to take your trip during April or May, make sure not to miss the 4,000 named Irises that are blooming row after row in the front of the gardens.

Now's the time to see what the town of Mineral Wells was built on - Crazy Water! Head back to Mineral Wells and north on TX-281 to the **Famous Mineral Water Company**. Mineral Wells was founded in the late 1800's by James Lynch. He and his wife (who suffered from rheumatism) and their family settled in

the hills of Palo Pinto County. Once acquainted with his surroundings, he dug a well and after drinking the “funny tasting” water, Lynch and his wife were cured of their rheumatism. Soon word spread and people were coming from all over to be healed by this miraculous water, giving birth to the Town of Mineral Wells.



The **Famous Mineral Water Company** bottles the infamous mineral water and continues to share in the rich heritage of the town. The store is full of black and white pictures that document the history of the water and town. While sitting at the bar drinking your water just as people have for two centuries, you'll be sure to feel a connected to the past. If you ask the owners, Carol and Scott Elder, they will tell the story of how Famous Water came to be. If you find yourself behind the store, you'll see the new **Crazy Bath House**, which is perfect for your overnight stay.

The new **Crazy Bath House** is a cozy, renovated house from the early 1900's that is home to the first mineral baths in the town since the 1970's. The house has two guest rooms with private mineral bath tubs, and you can even schedule a massage if you like. Staying overnight at the **Crazy Bath House** allows you to sip and soak in the Crazy Water and relax quietly before heading out of town.



## Jacksboro

Grab breakfast at **Jimmy's Café** on your way out of town and head north on Highway 281 to **Fort Richardson** in Jacksboro. The Fort was established in 1867 and then abandoned in 1878, leaving most of the building in ruin. The Fort's remaining 7 structures have been restored and are now maintained by Texas Parks and Wildlife. The grounds are now part of the National Historic Landmark that is **Fort Richardson**. While at the park, enjoy other activities such as hiking, biking, nature and historical studies and fishing.

From the Fort, get on US 380 W and savor a casual lunch from **526 Pizza Studio**. Their broad variety is sure to hit the spot and the food is anything but dull. Make sure to eat up because next up is Fort Belknap.

## Newcastle

Established in 1851, **Fort Belknap** was the northern mainstay of the Texas frontier defense. Walk the grounds and see the remaining buildings in the park-like setting. After you've walked off your lunch and stretched your legs, you'll then be ready for the scenic drive down Highway 16 to **Mary's Café** in Strawn.

## Strawn

**Mary's Café** opened in 1986 and has since been known for its chicken fried steak. In true Texas fashion, thinly sliced meat is covered in a delicate breading and served over a bead of Texas toast. As one of the few restaurants in the town of Strawn, there is something for everyone on the menu, including a Texas-sized hamburger sure to fill any stomach.

Now that you've explored a couple of forts, hiked the breathtaking Penitentiary Hollow and sipped and soaked in Crazy water, it's time to get back to reality. Don't forget; there are still more forts to see and more adventures to be had throughout rest of the Texas Forts Trail.

Lake Mineral Wells State Park and Trailway  
100 Park Rd 71, Mineral Wells, TX 76067  
(940) 328-1171  
[www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lake-mineral-wells](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lake-mineral-wells)

Brazos Market Bistro  
216 N Oak Ave, Mineral Wells, TX 76067  
(940) 468-2702  
[www.brazosmarket.com](http://www.brazosmarket.com)

Merrimac and North  
208 N Oak Ave, Mineral Wells, Texas 76067  
(940) 325-4722

Baker Hotel  
200 E Hubbard St, Mineral Wells, TX 76067

Clark Gardens  
567 Maddux Rd, Weatherford, TX 76088  
(940) 682-4856  
[www.clarkgardens.org](http://www.clarkgardens.org)  
Admission: Adults- \$9.00  
Children (4 to 12 years of age) - \$5.00  
Seniors (65 and over)- \$7.00

Famous Mineral Water Company  
209 NW 6th St, Mineral Wells, TX 76067  
(940) 325-8870  
[www.drinkcrazywater.com](http://www.drinkcrazywater.com)

Crazy Bath House  
609 N. W. 1st Ave, Mineral Wells, TX 76067  
(940) 325-8870  
[www.crazybathhouse.com](http://www.crazybathhouse.com)

Fort Richardson Historic State Park  
228 Park Road 61, Jacksboro, TX 76458  
(940) 567-3506  
[www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/fort-richardson](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/fort-richardson)  
Admission: Adults (13 years or older)- \$3.00

526 Pizza Studio  
526 Oak St, Graham, TX 76450  
(940) 549-6606

Fort Belknap  
114 Fort Cir, Newcastle, TX 76372  
(940) 846-3222

Mary's Café  
119 Grant Ave, Strawn, TX 76475  
(254) 672-5741